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Keeping Food Safe After a Natural Disaster or Power Outage

Identify and throw away food that may not be safe to eat

- Food may not be safe to eat during and after an emergency.
- Throw away food that may have come in contact with flood or storm water.
- Throw away perishable foods; meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and leftovers, that have been above 41 degrees (F) for over 2 hours.
- Thawed food that contains ice crystals, or is 41 degree (F) or below, can be refrozen or cooked.
- Throw away canned foods that are bulging, opened, or damaged.
- Food containers with screw-caps, snap-lids, crimped caps, twist caps, flip tops, snap-open and home canned foods should be discarded if they have come in contact with floodwater because they cannot be disinfected.
- If cans have come in contact with flood water or storm water, remove the labels, wash the cans, and dip them in a solution of 1 cup of bleach in 5 gallons of water. Re-label the cans with a marker.
- Do not use contaminated water to wash dishes, brush your teeth, wash and prepare food, wash your hands, make ice, or make baby formula.

Store Foods Safely

- While the power is out, keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.
- Add block ice or dry ice to your refrigerator if the electricity is expected to be off longer than 4 hours. Wear heavy gloves when handling ice.

Clean and Sanitize food-contact surfaces

1. Wash with soap and warm clean water.
2. Rinse with clean water.
3. Sanitize by immersing for 1 minute in a solution of 1 teaspoon of chlorine bleach (5.25%, unscented) per gallon of clean water.
4. Allow to air dry.

Be prepared for an emergency

- Store food items that do not require refrigeration and can be eaten cold or heated on an outdoor grill.
- Shelf-stable foods boxed or canned milk, water, and canned goods should be part of a planned emergency food supply.
- Be sure to keep a hand-held can opener for an emergency.
- Make sure to have ready-to-use baby formula for infants and pet food.
- Remember to use these items and replace them from time to time.